

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6186

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 686

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJ: SYRIA PUTS FINISHING TOUCHES ON PREPARATIONS
FOR FRANGIE VISIT

1. SUMMARY: KHADDAM, SHIHABI AND JAMIL ARE PUTTING
FINISHING TOUCHES ON GROUNDWORK FOR FEB 7 FRANGIE
VISIT TO DAMASCUS. KHADDAM TOLD PRESS THAT
AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED BETWEEN TWO PRESIDENTS ON
POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. SYRIAN MEDIA HAS CONTINUED
TO STRESS LEBANON'S RETURN TO RELATIVE STABILITY.
BODIES OF FIVE SYRIAN SOLDIERS REPORTEDLY BROUGHT
BACK TO DAMASCUS. END SUMMARY.

2. FEB 6 PRESS ANNOUNCED THAT PRES. FRANGIE WOULD
VISIT DAMASCUS FOLLOWING DAY. TO PUT FINISHING
TOUCHES ON GROUNDWORK WHICH HAS BEEN LAID FOR VISIT,
KHADDAM, SHIHABI AND JAMIL SPENT FEB 5 MEETING WITH
KEY PERSONALITIES IN LEBANON, INCLUDING PATRIARCH
KHREISH, ARAFAT, ZUHAYR MUHSIN, QULAYLAT, FRANGIE,
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KARAME AND OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS. FOLLOWING KHADDAM'S

TALKS WITH KHREISH, FONMIN TOLD PRESS, "AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED BETWEEN PRESIDENTS ASAD AND FRANGIE ON A COMPLETE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS."

3. CONSISTENT LINE IN SYRIAN MEDIA HAS BEEN TO STRESS CONTINUING RETURN OF NORMALCY TO LEBANON.

4. FEB 4 PRESS PUBLISHED PORTIONS OF KHADDAM INTERVIEW GRANTED TO LEBANESE WEEKLY AL-JAMHOUR IN WHICH KHADDAM FLATLY STATED THAT NO SYRIAN TROOPS HAD ENTERED OR WOULD ENTER LEBANON. FONMIN ALSO DENIED REPORTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM THAT SYRIA WOULD WITHDRAW PLA UNITS AT LEBANON'S REQUEST. REASON, HE ASSERTED, WAS THAT PLA ATTACHED TO PLO AND DID NOT OPERATE UNDER SYRIA CONTROL, THEREFORE SYRIA OBVIOUSLY COULD NOT WITHDRAW TROOPS WHICH IT NEVER SENT IN UNDER ITS OWN ORDERS IN FIRST PLACE. HE NOTED THAT PLO WOULD NATURALLY REMOVE PLA UNITS ONCE TRANQUILITY AND SECURITY COMPLETELY RESTORED AND ALL PARTIES IMPLEMENTING AGREEMENT.

5. USUALLY RELIABLE SYRIAN SOURCE HAS INFORMED US THAT FIVE BODIES OF SYRIAN SOLDIERS FROM ALI HAYDAR'S SPECIAL FORCES, WHOM SOURCE BELIEVES WERE SERVING IN SAIQA, WERE BROUGHT BACK TO DAMASCUS FROM LEBANON FEB 4. SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT SOME OFFICERS FROM ADNAN AL-ASAD'S SPECIAL UNITS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO PLA TO HELPMANTAIN INTERNAL DISCIPLINE AND ENSURE PLA RESPONSIVENESS TO SYRIAN DIRECTION.

6. COMMENT: THIS IS MOST CONCRETE REPORT THUS FAR OF SYRIAN TROOPS SERVING IN PALESTINIAN UNITS IN LEBANON. GIVEN COMMUNICATIONS, COMMAND AND CONTROL PROBLEMS BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND PALESTINIAN FORCES OPERATING IN LEBANON AND VITAL IMPORTANCE OF RESTRAINT AND RESPONSIBILITY ON PART OF THOSE FORCES TO SUCCESS OF SYRIAN EFFORTS, IT SEEMS REASONABLE THAT SARG WOULD WANT TO HEDGE ITS RISK BY PLACING SOME OF ITS OWN TROOPS IN KEY PALESTINIAN UNITS. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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SEVERAL PARTIES WHO WOULD SEE BENEFIT IN CLAIMING GREATER SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON THAN ACTUALLY EXISTS; WE THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT REPORTS SUCH AS PARA 5 ABOVE SHOULD BE TREATED WITH CAUTION PENDING FIRMER CONFIRMATION. MURPHY

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